

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

**Twins
trust.** We support
twins, triplets
and more...

▶ 10 top tips for parents and families of twins, triplets and more...

Twins Trust carried out a survey of hundreds of mums and dads of multiples. More than sixty percent of them listed these as their top tips for dealing with depression during pregnancy and after birth:

1. Ask for help and accept help

Asking for help is important. Although some parents do get better without any help it can often take a long time. This can mean a lot of suffering and can spoil the experience of parenthood. It can also put a strain on your relationship with your babies and partner.

When you are suffering in silence you may not look after your babies, or yourself, as well as you would when you are well.

Reach out and seek support - don't suffer in silence!

Accept help. Don't be afraid to let someone know you are struggling.

2. Talk to someone - to anyone

Talking about your feelings can be helpful, however depressed you are. Expressing how you are feeling is not easy. It can, however, be a relief to tell someone how you feel. Talking it through can also help you to understand and make sense of your difficulties and emotions.

Talk to someone who will listen.

Don't hide away. Talk about how you are feeling.

3. Don't feel ashamed or blame yourself for your feelings

Recognising that you have an illness is important. Don't dismiss it as the 'baby blues'. Don't assume it's normal to feel like this when coping with twins, triplets or more. There is nothing to be ashamed of and there is no one to blame. Postnatal depression (PND) is an illness.

Don't be afraid to admit that you need help - being a parent of multiples is hard!!!

Don't feel ashamed. Make sure you get the help you need; it's not your fault. You're not a bad mum.

4. Get help early

The sooner you reach out for help, the sooner you can get the support and treatment you need and the sooner you can get better. There are different forms of treatment available such as therapy, self help strategies and medication.

Midwives, health visitors and doctors are there to help, not judge. The sooner you speak to someone, the sooner you can begin getting support and start treatment.

Get help early - as soon as you feel something isn't right.

5. Find others in a similar position

Talking to others who have experienced PND can be very helpful. Many people find it brings them comfort and support when they talk to others who have been through the same or similar. Most people will be glad to hear your experience so they can either get the courage to open up or take comfort that they are not alone.

I thought it was only me who felt that way. Then I discovered that I wasn't alone.

The PND support group normalised my feelings for me. Find a local support group.

6. Celebrate small achievements and take one day at a time

Don't put pressure on yourself. Looking after two or more babies is hard work even when you are not ill. Focus on what you have achieved not what you haven't. Try not to get frustrated if you don't do the things you planned to.

Focus on what you have achieved (even if it's just getting dressed) rather than what you haven't.

Be kind to yourself. You're doing the best you can.

7. Persistently seek help - don't give up

If the help you seek does not come immediately please do keep trying. Each of us is unique and sometimes it can take a few attempts to find the help and treatment that will work for you.

If help doesn't come when you ask for it, be persistent until someone listens.

Keep seeking out resources until you find something that works for you.

8. Try to get out and about

A sense of isolation can be the most stressful aspect of parenting.

Physical activity is an anti-depressant; it can boost your mood, especially if it's enjoyable. Walking with your babies in the pram is good exercise.

Try and get out each day. Fresh air is good for you and the babies.

It can seem like too much effort to get out of the house but you will immediately begin to reap the benefits.

9. Work with your partner - be a team

Living with mental health problems is difficult for the whole family. Treat yourself as if you have a physical illness. Working together to support each other physically and mentally will help.

Keep talking to each other and be honest.

Be patient with each other at this difficult time.

10. Research and understand PND

Understanding PND and your mental health will support your recovery. It can help to contact organisations that support parents with Postnatal Depression. Some people find self-help books and specialist support is also available online.

PND is beyond your control. It is good to understand what it is and what the symptoms are.

It takes time to get better. Believe in yourself.

These top tips have been put together from Twins Trust's Health and Wellbeing Survey.

Check out these insightful and heartfelt videos from mums of multiples who experienced PND:

www.twintrust.org/mentalhealth

You can also download Twins Trust's PND Booklet from this page.

 www.twintrust.org

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